

Journey to College

It's Never Too Early

To Plan for College and a Career



Where will *your* journey lead?

Getting an education is more important than ever before. Although you won't apply to college until high school, there are many things you can do to be ready when the time comes. In fact, you can start preparing for the future now by making a plan!



Find *A Path*

Discover your interests

Take classes, job shadow, volunteer, and join in activities and summer camps that you are curious about. Once you know what you like, you can explore careers that match up.

Ask yourself questions, like:

- Do you like helping people?
- Do you like working with your hands or designing new things?
- What are some things you are good at?
- What have you found that is really interesting or exciting to do in school or after school?

Try interviewing people who have jobs you find interesting. Explore all kinds of jobs to get a good feel for what you like most.

Know Your Options

It is okay if you don't know what you want to be when you grow up. There are a lot of careers to choose from, and more are created every day. Now is a good time to learn about the types of jobs available and talk to people to learn about jobs you might like.

Questions you might ask:

- What is a typical workday like?
- How do you use technology in your job?
- What type of education do you need to do this job?
- What do you like most about your job?

Know Your Path

There are many ways to continue learning after high school. Spend some time researching them and find out what path will lead you to your dream job.



Become a Registered Apprentice

Registered Apprenticeships offer a chance to learn on the job while making money. Opportunities are available in healthcare, IT, education, and other trades. You can enroll in an apprenticeship before, during, or after college.



Complete a Professional Certificate

Earn a certificate to demonstrate that you have specific knowledge or skills in a specific field. These training programs are focused and often take less time to earn than a degree.



Tech and Trade Schools

A technical school, vocational school, or trade school may be the right choice if you are interested in training that focuses on developing practical skills and expertise for specific jobs. These schools focus on hands-on learning and prepare students for trade and technical jobs.



Attend a 4-year or 2-year College

There are a lot of things to consider when choosing a college. Two-year colleges, like community colleges, are an affordable option that offer associates degrees and vocational training specific to certain jobs. Four-year colleges, like universities and liberal arts colleges, offer bachelor's degrees and a wide range of options to study.

Make *The Grade*

Being the best student you can be will help you succeed in a future career. Take school seriously and learn as much as you can. Getting good grades or practicing a skill can create more chances for scholarships and give you more choices for where you could attend college. Working hard now will pay off in the end.

Make the Most of School



Complete

all classwork on time



Practice

being a good leader



Never give up

and ask for help
when you need it



Get involved

in activities and
organizations

Establish Good Habits

Choices you make now can help you succeed in high school and prepare for college. It's important to start good habits early on.

- 1 Spend time reading
- 2 Pay attention in class
- 3 Learn how to budget
- 4 Practice being on time
- 5 Learn how to study



Check out these helpful study hints!



Parents, *Think Ahead*

It's never too early to start thinking about higher education, and you are the most influential person in your child's life. Talk with your children about their hopes and dreams. Learn their motivations, and help them develop skills and hobbies they can use in the future. Once they reach their final year in high school, they will be ready to make some important decisions about the kind of education they'll need to achieve their goals.

The benefits of college

Each year, more jobs require education beyond high school; however, not every career requires a four-year college degree. Continuing education beyond high school to any level is important. More education is often tied to:

- Lower unemployment rates
- Higher pay
- Better health care benefits

College graduates with a bachelor's degree earn **\$1.2 million** more in a lifetime, on average, than those without a degree.

Median usual weekly earnings (\$)

Doctoral degree	\$2,278	Associate degree	\$1,099
Professional degree	\$2,363	Some college, no degree	\$1,020
Master's degree	\$1,840	High school diploma	\$930
Bachelor's degree	\$1,543	Less than a high school diploma	\$738

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics 2024

Free Publications & Resources

To learn more about our publications, visit: <https://dhewd.mo.gov/ppc/publications>.

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TIPS FOR HELPING YOUR STUDENT STUDY

Studying

Ask your student to explain the examples that they are having trouble with. This will help you understand what they are struggling with and you can help them.

Reading

Read aloud regularly with them.

Mark Important Notes

Color Code

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Tips for Note Taking

Lectures

Study Guides

Mark Important Notes

Color Code

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Turning Kids' Hobbies into Skills

Spiky

Miniature Toppers & Lyrics

Playing Cards

Cartoons I am interested in:

5

Funding *Your Journey*

Student financial aid statistics indicate that 87.3% of first-time college students benefit from some form of financial aid.

Source: EducationData.org, February 3, 2025, https://educationdata.org/financial_aid_statistics

Saving for college

Start saving for college as early as possible. You can watch your savings grow while your children grow. Money saved through **MOST 529** - a state-sponsored education savings plan that offers tax advantages - can be used for qualified higher-education expenses at eligible colleges, trade schools, vocational schools and apprenticeships. Find out more at **Missourimost.org**.



It's never too early to start planning, but it's also never too late. If you're interested in continuing your education, there are financial aid options available. Check out **MOFastTrack.com** to learn about a grant to help Missouri adults earn their certificate, degree, or industry-recognized credential. It's never too late to be a role model.



Paying for college

Higher education doesn't have to be out of reach due to cost. Degree and certificate programs come in a range of prices, depending on the type of school students choose and the financial aid they receive.

Missouri has many affordable higher education options. The cost to attend college at numerous Missouri schools can be found at **dhewd.mo.gov/data/tuitionandfees.php**.

Federal and state grants, scholarships, work-study, and loans are available to a majority of students to help pay for college. The U.S. Department of Education and the state of Missouri offer millions of dollars in financial aid to students each year.

For more information on applying for scholarships visit **journeytocollege.mo.gov/pay/scholarships/**



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